

Linda Clair
Meditation Retreat
Kallara Conference Centre, Australia – March 2020
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 2B – Sunday morning discussion session

Linda: It feels to me like everyone's settled into this more quickly than usual. It feels very quiet. It feels like everyone is together rather than scattered. I'm particularly enjoying the walking. I really like P.'s instruction, especially the bit where both heels are up at the same time. It's great.

Have you settled in B.?

Question: I didn't really like this morning at all. (Laughter) Everyone else might have thought it was good but I was nearly falling asleep. Then I did the walking and felt I was nearly going to fall over all the time. It wasn't marvellous. Apart from that I'm alright.

Linda: Do you want to be anywhere else but here?

Question: Practically anywhere this morning. (Laughter) But I know there's no point in it. So, it's alright.

Linda: You're probably not the only one.

Sometimes it is difficult to keep your balance when you're doing it properly, it is difficult.

Question: It's the slowness. I could do that walk if I could do it a little bit faster.

Linda: Well, if you want to go somewhere else and do it a bit faster you're welcome to do that. If you want to go outside and do it or just in that room and do it a bit faster. Not everyone of course, but if you want to B... and anyone over eighty-five. (Laughter)

Question: For some reason it's very hard to keep your balance when you're going so slowly.

Linda: It is but it keeps you very aware of your body and that's the idea; to be very aware of your body. And often, when I sit back down my body is vibrating; it feels great! So it does tend to wake you up. It's a really strong practice. But if you want to go a bit faster go somewhere else: just down the hall or outside and do it out there.

Question: Then I fell back into my past and trying, I suppose, to avoid all these difficulties. But I thought, "I don't want to do that."

Linda: No, you don't. It's boring. Nothing's more interesting than just being here, eventually. But initially, there can be reactions to it like, "I'm much happier thinking. It's much more exciting," all that sort of stuff. But that's just a transition.

And it's very difficult to describe how it's going to be – how it is – because it's not something that you've felt before; it's an absence of something – not the presence of something else – it's the absence of something else. It's the absence of things.

And that's almost impossible to describe. You can only experience it or feel it yourself.

Question: Yes, because you would think that there was going to be something else to replace all the thinking and the dreaming and things like that.

Linda: That's true. You think something else is going to replace it; that you're still going to be a person but a different person. But it's not like that.

So the peace that you were saying that you have been feeling means that there's an absence of fear. Peace is only the absence of anxiety, of fear.

Question: So then there's just living?

Linda: Yes. And living, or life can be amazing when there's no fear.

Question: I can understand that it could be...

Linda: Incredible. But there's a deep fear of having no fear and that's just the resistance of the mind; your past – who you think you are – resisting it.

Question: In a certain way, the fear is "interesting."

Linda: Yes, the whole thing is interesting, when you look at it. And people tend to think the fear is what keeps them and everything alive. But it's the opposite. It puts you into this dream-like state where you're too scared to really feel anything.

Question: And frightened to do a lot of things too.

Linda: And you also do a lot of things because you're frightened.

Question: Which you otherwise wouldn't do.

Linda: It doesn't mean that you're not going to be busy or that you're not going to work. The intention behind it will be completely different though. You're not busy to try and avoid something; you're just busy.

Question: I've got a practical question. (Good.) I had a pretty shit-night sleep. (Laughter) I track my sleep and it said I had a good night sleep which is a lie because I just felt I was awake the entire night. Any hints?

Linda: It's going to happen on and off particularly during a retreat. Do you usually sleep well at home? Are you still a late nighter?

Question: I am. I'm training myself to be a good sleeper. It's a work in progress. 😊

Linda: Try not to try and go to sleep. Just lie down with as little intention as possible. Just lie down to give your body a rest. Don't get into thinking, "I'm not going to survive tomorrow if I don't sleep," because you'll get yourself worked up about it. During a retreat you're going to become more energised so sometimes it is going to be very difficult to go to sleep because you're so awake and you become more and more awake. But you have to trust when you really need to sleep you will.

I'd suggest at lunch time go and lie down, again, without the intention of going to sleep but just lie down with nothing else – no books, no intention to sleep, but just to have a break and see what happens. You might have a bit of a micro sleep or you might not. That might help you through the day. Often, the Sunday is the hardest day because you're settling in; it's a shock to be here. You feel like you don't want to be here. You'd rather be comfortable at home but that will change.

So with the sleep, don't try too hard with it. It will happen sometimes where you do have very little sleep and then when you're exhausted enough you'll suddenly have a sleep. You never know. So try not to get worried about it. And if you are really tired during the day, just go and lie down.

Question: It felt like I needed to drink a lot of water to ground the energy.

Linda: Yes, you'll get very hot at times doing this. It does heat your body up to a degree. So quite a bit of water is good just to flush out your system. You can get a bit dehydrated because you do have periods where you feel very hot. Things are burning up; you're past is burning up and you do feel that as a sensation in your body at times. The lack of sleep is more that you feel so awake.

Question: Would you recommend grounding, like walking barefoot outside?

Linda: Not necessarily barefoot, especially at night because there could be creatures around. 😊 But yes, I'd say, during the day, or at night if you've got shoes on, walk around if you feel too. Go and sit outside for a while, and look at the stars. It can help if you do get up and have a little walk and then go back; it can give you that extra grounding. I do that sometimes if I'm not sleeping. I get up and go for a walk and then go back.

But try not to worry about it and go, "I've got to get this amount of sleep." This whole practice affects your sleep pattern for ever. You never know when you're going to sleep. It's not nearly as reliable as it used to be. You would have found that already.

Question: Yes, I'm not worried. It's just annoying.

Linda: It is annoying when you just want to go to sleep and it's a bit tedious being awake the whole night when you're awake in the day too. But if you can have a bit of a micro nap in the day it can take the edge off the whole thing. And go outside; go for a walk.

Eat enough. Don't go on a fast during a retreat because it will just speed up everything and it might get a bit much. So just eat moderately. Be moderate, especially the first few days. It's a huge thing to do this. It takes a lot of energy; a different sort of energy to what you're used to.

I'd say don't do anything extreme during a retreat. So if you drink quite a bit of coffee, I'd say, don't give it up during a retreat; don't suddenly become pure because when you're doing this a lot of stuff

comes up; a lot of emotional stuff comes up. It can speed it up, not eating because eating does ground you to a degree. I'm not saying stuff your face – it's not that – but just do things moderately and don't do anything too extreme. But if you fast – it depends on if you feel like doing it – but I'd suggest not to do it during a retreat because it will bring things up more quickly because you're not grounding it with food.

And the same if you drink coffee or tea; don't give it up during a retreat because you'll have strong withdrawals and you're having enough withdrawals as it is from thinking and emotions and stuff; it will just stir things up too much. So I'd say eat reasonably lightly but frequently. And maybe, if you can, have something just before you go to sleep. If you're having a lot of trouble it can help you to sleep a little bit.

Question: I've been enjoying the walking too. I had a reasonable sit the first half this morning and enjoyed the walking and then soon after I sat down I was almost intolerably tired. I didn't sleep well last night and thought that's what it was. I didn't feel that I could sit so I put my head down and must have gone to sleep but when I sat up again after the bell I felt nauseous. My sense is the sleeping is me avoiding whatever was being stirred up.

Linda: I think you probably slept because you were tired. If you're that tired, it's not usually an avoidance.

Sometimes if you're really drowsy when you're sitting it can be a bit of resistance coming up. Other times, especially if you haven't slept well, you probably needed a sleep. I don't feel it was an avoidance. So if you're that tired, have a sleep, especially if you feel a bit faint if you're sitting up.

Question: As you know, being sleepy has been a big issue for me for many years. I've wondered before if as soon as there's something around fears, that's my way of shutting it out.

Linda: I don't know. Sometimes when you're doing this and there's an incredible amount of energy moving around your body, it can make you incredibly tired. So it could be that.

So again, if you feel that tired, sleep. It's actually better to do that than to sit up and feel like you're falling asleep. It's better to just get it over with; have a nap.

Question: For months I've been remembering a lot of my dreams. How do I become aware in my dreams? I feel annoyed that I'm not in the present moment in my dreams. I actually remember having a dinner conversation and talking about meditation in my dream but I wasn't meditating. I've been carrying a lot emotional hangover from my dreams. In one of my dreams I went to repair my watch and they were trying to cheat me and I was angry while I was riding my bike to work because I thought, "Oh, that person cheated me," but I knew it was my dream. Today I woke with a very disturbing dream. I remember just a few minutes of it but I woke up disturbed. I started breathing and I didn't let it disturb me too long. I can remember my whole night sometimes full of dreams.

Linda: When I was practicing I was very aware of my dreams and I'd often have anxiety dreams trying to get somewhere. That was a repetitive one. I was trying to get somewhere and I just couldn't do it; things just kept getting in my way.

I've never been into getting into dreams. I know there are some traditions and practices that use dreams a lot but I'm not very experienced in doing it and I've never done it a whole lot. They're significant, but not all that significant.

I don't see how you can be in the present moment in a dream because a dream is just thinking, really. It's an unconscious thought that is coming up while you're asleep. You do have periods during the night, which is probably most of the time you're asleep for most people, where you're in deep, dreamless sleep but you're just not aware of that; all you're aware of is the time that you've dreamt.

I would suggest try not to worry about it. Just see it. You'll have that disturbed feeling about something you dreamt but don't try and remember exactly what it is. Sometimes it can feel like it's really interesting and you can maybe talk about with someone.

I don't have a whole lot of dreams now but sometimes I still do. I might remember them or maybe not but I don't place a whole lot of importance on them. I think it can get in the way a bit. Some people do get into them and there's probably value in that but I don't know enough about it to suggest anything. I would suggest, just see it and if you do feel like writing it down do that. But it's like writing down your thoughts.

Question: I don't really find them meaningful and I don't want to get into the analysis but I want to understand during your practice/journey. I feel counting and coming back to the breath have sort of entered my subconscious. If I'm just walking around I'll start counting my steps and at work start doing counting or breathing. Does this unconscious...?

Linda: No, I'd say that's conscious, not unconscious. It's making you more conscious and it's a conscious practice that is becoming more natural and conscious. The unconscious stuff is coming out in your dreams. That's the stuff that you probably can't express so much during the day and you don't want to.

With the counting, it's not that you're repressing it. You're not allowing yourself to get taken away by it. So at times, when you're asleep, the dreams are going to come out like that, especially the anxiety ones.

Question: What I'm trying to ask about and thinking about meditation. Like, I was in India trying to do a Skype call with you but I couldn't find the space at my parents' place because they were nagging me or the house was too full. Now I feel it has entered my subconscious. Will it start entering unconscious like getting into that and...

Linda: Don't worry about it. Just leave it. It's just stuff coming out while you're asleep. Don't try and manipulate it. It's just like thinking; let it go. It doesn't matter really what you're thinking about.

Most of your dreams are fear based; it's just fear coming out while you're asleep. So I would say, don't try and manipulate them or do anything with them. You might remember them in the morning and it might seem interesting. It's not like they're never significant; sometimes they are. But you can get off track and put too much significance on them, whereas really it's just fear coming out when you're asleep.

So just let it be. Don't try and do anything with it. Don't try and be more conscious while you're asleep. It will happen naturally.

What you said about being very aware while you're conscious is a really good thing. The fact that you're having dreams like that just means that you're not allowing your mind to take over while you're awake. So when you're asleep at times it's coming in and trying to get you that way. But I'd say, just leave it – leave it. It's a good question though.